



*Paddler's Preview:  
A Test of the New 2010 Impex Hatteras*

# Mindfulness Comes to Sea Kayak Design and Build

BY TOM DOLANJSKI

Mindfulness can be regarded as a life philosophy, meditative practice or psychotherapeutic tool. So what does it have to do with sea kayaks?

Every design feature built into a kayak will have an impact on the fit and performance of the boat. By carefully and skillfully incorporating well thought out design, a builder can produce a kayak that is both enjoyable and sea-worthy.

**A Slightly Wider Beam** in a high performance kayak lends greater stability without a feeling of sluggishness. At 16 feet in length and 22.5 inches wide, the Hatteras cruises along on calm water but is waiting for something more interesting. **Increased Rocker** allows for the high degree of maneuverability demanded of kayaks in waves and wind. At this year's Surfing Superior Confluence hosted by Naturally Superior Adventures, I watched as NSA Director, David Wells nimbly spun the Hatteras through 360 degrees while holding the hull almost vertical.

**A New Seat** takes advantage of the wider cockpit to offer a bigger sitting space. Cut out at the thighs and sloped to a greater degree in the front, the redesigned seat provides the opportunity for all day comfort to a variety of shapes. A new high density foam pad distributes pressure evenly and slightly raises the center of gravity. **A Higher**

**Foredeck** results in the obvious: more room for the paddler. Less obvious is the opportunity for a more upright, almost aggressive paddling position. The ride is also drier with small to moderate waves rarely cresting the deck. Wind chop becomes a non-issue.

**The Paddling Princess** had an opportunity to spend some quality time in the Hatteras. Once I carried the kayak down to the water and launched it, she quite enjoyed herself. She remarked on how readily the Hatteras submit to her regal curves. She also found the higher sitting position was better suited to someone in power. The Hatteras was given Royal Approval.

**A Lower Reardeck** changes the handling dynamic. While greater maneuverability follows lower volume behind the paddler (and other design features), the response to beam winds is altered. The net effect of a higher foredeck together with a lower reardeck is a more balanced hull. The traditional tendency to turn into the wind remains but is less pronounced. Small changes in skeg depth allow the paddler to easily adjust the heading.

**Easy to Roll** is a tag often used but what does it really mean and how do you know? I would suggest that it's a very subjective notion depending on the paddler, the day, the level of energy in the universe, breakfast... Nevertheless, an NSA

instructor put the Hatteras through a variety of rolls (Angel roll?) and finished with a smile. A fan tow gone bad gave me a firsthand experience. In the end, we were upright and the inside of the kayak remained dry. **Hatches That Don't Leak** are very important. Most of us don't think about this feature when surveying the market but we demand it. [Note to Manufactures: Paddlers won't buy a kayak if they hear of problems with hatches leaking].

What is a **Hatteras**? It turns out I was asking the wrong question. Cape Hatteras is in the Outer Banks of North Carolina, a prime surf destination.

**Final Thoughts** for the Hatteras run close to my ideal for a rough water sea kayak. Mindful design and build result in a boat that is a pleasure to paddle. Maneuverability and quickness are essential. Predictable handling in waves and strong winds is reassuring. Increased comfort and a drier ride add to the package. **No Single Kayak** is ideally suited to all paddlers or at home in all conditions. At White Squall's Georgian Bay Storm Gathering, comments from a vast array of paddlers ranged from "Wow" to "The rear deck could be even lower" to "I'd prefer a more defined edge". I'll be dreaming of sitting tall in a Hatteras in rolling surf.